

issues

Message from the State Veterinarian

Have you been following news coverage of predictions of an influenza pandemic? It can be difficult to sort out the facts amid so much confusing information, predictions, opinions and speculation. Here are a few key points that all Hoosiers need to know:

- 1. The flu pandemic does not yet exist.** Scientists around the globe are predicting another influenza pandemic, much like what the world experienced in 1918, then in the 1950s and 1960s in this century. But those are just predictions right now. To have a pandemic, a disease must pass easily from person to person, with a high rate of illness and often a high death rate. Current fears about the H5N1 avian influenza virus are based on an *expectation* that the virus is going to mutate into a disease that can spread easily from person to person. That, however, has not happened yet.

H5N1, as it exists now, is able to pass from infected birds to people who are in very close contact. Individuals may be literally living with these birds, handling them very closely, or consuming them without proper food preparation and handling. These human cases have not resulted from person-to-person transmission; therefore, it is not a pandemic threat. The virus must undergo a change (or “mutation”) before that can happen.

Why the concern about H5N1? Some researchers believe that this particular strain shows some characteristics that are very similar to the 1918 virus that proved so devastating worldwide. It’s also had a unique ability to pass directly from birds to people without moving through another species, such as swine, to mutate first. Fortunately, H5N1 lacks the critical ability to move from person-to-person.

- 2. Not all avian influenzas are alike.** Avian influenza exists in many different forms. Often “AI” is referred to by an H and N number designation. These labels refer to the different patterns of proteins on the surface of the virus, which also tells those of us in the human and animal health world a lot about how a particular strain behaves. In theory, as many as 144 different combinations of Hs and Ns can exist, although that many strains have not been identified.

If a positive diagnosis of AI is made in North America, take time to find out more about what strain it is. Most forms of AI have no, or only minimal, human health effects. Just because a case of AI is discovered, whether it’s H5N1 or not, it does not warrant undue fear by the public.

All strains of avian influenza are reportable to BOAH under state law. Highly pathogenic strains (including H5N1) are considered foreign animal diseases that would trigger emergency response efforts. As part of BOAH’s field investigations for a variety of poultry health problems, AI surveillance is standard. A confirmed diagnosis would launch the Indiana State Poultry Association’s Poultry Health and Response Plan, a joint readiness plan between BOAH and industry first developed in 1985.

- 3. Don’t be afraid to eat poultry or egg products.** With proper cooking and handling, avian influenza presents no food safety threat. As I said, most strains of AI have no human health effects.

issues

is published quarterly by
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Our nation's poultry industry has been concerned with the presence of any form of the disease for more than two decades with a broad flock testing program in place *since the 1980s*. While the industry has taken action to step up testing recently to provide consumers with even greater assurance about the safety of their products, protecting our food supply against this disease has been a high priority for years. This is standard practice—not reactionary response to extensive media coverage and public hype.

Poultry producers have a vested interest in keeping their flocks free of any strain of the disease, as one positive case of any type can shut international trade.

4. American agriculture is not like farming in other countries. American poultry, for the most part, is raised indoors, in bio-secure environments, away from migratory birds and other pests that can introduce disease. In other parts of the world, birds are raised very differently—often *within* the homes of people who own them. That increases disease exposure opportunities for the birds, as well as their handlers. Most of us have little or no contact with domestic or wild birds on a daily basis.

5. We all need to be prepared for all disasters. This particular disease threat has captured the attention of the public and the media unlike any other in recent memory. While the pandemic flu does not yet exist, the core message emergency planners are trying to convey is still valid and clear: We all need to be prepared for any type of disaster. Much like Hurricane Katrina, this scenario presents an opportunity to educate the public and raise awareness about personal preparedness. We need to heed that message and be ready. At the same time, we need to be vigilant. Without panic. Without fearing our food supply. Without fearing the birds in our yards.

That's been a core message of the Board of Animal Health as we train others to be prepared for large-scale animal health emergencies, as well as situational disasters (such as floods or chemical spills) in our Animal Issues in Disasters course. The course, originally developed by our staff in 2001, is a one-day course that covers steps to preparedness, along with an overview of response activities by BOAH and other agencies.

BOAH, in conjunction with the Indiana Department of Homeland Security (IDHS), will be offering the class for the third time this year on May 17 at Camp Atterbury. Space is still available in the course, by registering through IDHS. To print a registration form, visit the BOAH website at www.boah.in.gov and click on the "What's New" option at the top.

The Board of Animal Health recently participated in the Governor's Pandemic Influenza Summit, with the opportunity to host a break out session oriented to agriculture. We were glad to have that opportunity and the support of this administration on this subject—other states have not recognized how agriculture is intertwined in this topic. I encourage everyone in the agriculture community to become educated about avian influenza, the pandemic flu and the difference between the two.

Bret D. Marsh, DVM

Indiana State Veterinarian

Certificates of Veterinary Inspection

IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR VETERINARIANS AND THEIR STAFFS: BOAH is aware of a number of problems with the most recent printing of the large and small animal certificates of veterinary inspection (CVIs). A change in the vendor resulted in a number of logistical issues that we are in the process of correcting. We hope to

have new pads of CVIs distributed to clinics by early summer. (State rules for soliciting printing bids and establishing delivery take several weeks.)

Go ahead and continue to use, as best you can, the CVIs in your possession. If you need additional forms for the exhibition season, contact us as usual to order them. As soon as the new ones are delivered, we'll issue new pads and destroy the defective sets. We apologize for any inconvenience this has caused you.

IMPORTANT INFO ABOUT THE STARRED OPTIONS: With the 2005 revision of the large animal CVI—the first major overhaul in years—BOAH added the option for practitioners to fill out a second CVI sheet as a “continuation page.” From the feedback we've received, there's some confusion on the use of the starred box options. Please understand:

1. When completing only the starred boxes, that form is considered a continuation page to another, fully completed CVI. The second (and subsequent) pages, therefore, **must accompany the first sheet**. They should never be sent to BOAH or another destination separately. Doing so invalidates the second page. Without the first page, it is considered incomplete and invalid.
2. Animals moving to different destinations from a single site must move under separate, fully completed CVIs.
3. Animals moving to a single destination from a single site, but at different times must move under separate CVIs. All forms must be sent together.
4. Signatures and legible licensing information must be on **all** CVI pages.
5. The pre-printed CVI number of the first page **must be written on all continuation pages** to help BOAH and other receivers match the CVI sheets.

Questions or clarifications about use of the CVIs should be directed to the local BOAH field veterinarian or animal health specialist, or emailed to animalhealth@boah.in.gov.

Meat & Poultry

THE NUMBERS are in for the 2005 fiscal year state-inspected slaughter. Indiana inspected a staggering 114,651 head of livestock and poultry. This number included nearly 30,000 cattle and almost 42,000 swine. Only 15 cattle and 5 swine were condemned in Indiana.

Indiana's Custom Exempt establishments also slaughtered large numbers for 2005. 16,471 head of livestock and 35,562 poultry were slaughtered at custom exempt plants. These numbers add up to over 28 million pounds of red meat processed and over 3.5 million pounds of poultry processed.

Companion Animal

A CAT in Germany was recently diagnosed with the H5N1 strain of avian influenza. Although research has shown that domestic cats may die from the virus, cats play an unlikely role in the natural transmission cycle of H5N1 virus. Cat infections occasionally occur in association with H5N1 breaks in domestic or wild birds, for example, when cats feed on infected birds. Experimentally infected cats shed the virus via the respiratory and intestinal tract, and may therefore transmit the virus to other cats. For more information regarding avian influenza in cats, contact Dr. Sandi Norman, Director, Companion Animal Division at 317/227-0323 or via email at snorman@boah.in.gov.

Cattle/Ruminant

THE MINNESOTA Board of Animal Health recently announced that a farmed white-tailed deer tested positive for chronic wasting disease (CWD).

The brain stem and lymph nodes from a 10-year-old female white-tailed deer were submitted to the U.S Department of Agriculture's National Veterinary Services Laboratory (NVSL) in Ames, Iowa, after the animal was euthanized due to illness. NVSL confirmed the animal had CWD. The Minnesota Board

of Animal Health quarantined the herd on March 14. Meanwhile, officials continue to investigate the source of the infection and whether other cervidae may have been exposed.

USDA HAS confirmed a third case of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) in the United States. Through dentition, experts confirmed the animal was at least 10-years-old. This means the cow was born prior to the ban on feeding of meat and bone meal. The cow was non-ambulatory and had resided on the farm in Alabama for less than a year.

Samples from the carcass have been sent to NVSL to match DNA with suspected siblings and offspring found during the epidemiological investigation. In addition to the carcass, federal agriculture officials located a six-week-old calf belonging to the BSE positive animal. The calf has been quarantined and is being moved to NVSL for further observation.

BOARD MEMBERS passed a final rule concerning the movement of sheep and goats into Indiana. The new rule removes requirement that the animals come from flocks/herds free of sore mouth, foot rot or caseous lymphadenitis. The rule also removes the requirement that veterinarians certify that status on the large animal certificate of veterinary inspection (CVI). For more information about the new rule contact Dr. Cheryl Miller at cmiller@boah.in.gov.

Dairy

THE RESULTS are in from the dairy survey. The survey produced a remarkable 38 percent return rate. This type of interest is very encouraging. More information on survey results will be forthcoming after the final report is delivered by the survey company.

Disaster Preparedness/ASERT

BOAH, IN cooperation with Purdue University's Homeland Security Institute, Indiana Veterinary Medicine Association, Pork Checkoff, Pork Trucker Quality Assurance and the Hugh & Mair Lewis Fund for Biomedical Information Resources, has developed the National Biosecurity Resource Center for Animal Health Emergencies. The Resource Center contains a database designed to store information about resources available in a community during an emergency. Resources may include everything from horse trailers and livestock equipment to dog crates and pet food. By identifying these resources, responders can work within the community to protect its animal population in a more efficient manner.

The resource database can not be successful without the help the community. Animal supplies, professional skills, or any type of equipment that could be useful in an emergency situation can be registered by simply visiting the Resource Center website at www.biosecuritycenter.org and clicking "add county resource." All information entered into the system is password-protected and is accessible only by the local emergency management director and specific emergency responders. Sign up today by visiting the website at: www.biosecuritycenter.org.

Animal Identification

AS SEPTEMBER grows closer, BOAH receives more premise registration forms daily. To date, Indiana has more than 5000 registered premises. Although some states are requiring individual identification, Indiana's law requires only premise registration by Sept. 1, 2006. Premises that must be registered include any location involved with the purchase, sale or exhibition of livestock.

Spreading the word about premise identification continues to be a challenge. Recently, online registration was added to the BOAH website as another tool for making registration accessible to all livestock owners. County extension educators are playing a huge role in premise identification by providing the forms and literature to 4-H exhibitors and producers. Some Hoosier veterinarians are even getting involved with the program by providing their clients with literature and registration forms. Practitioners interested in receiving premise identification brochures and registration forms should contact Dr. Jennifer Greiner or Theresa Shuck at 317/227-0328 or via email at animalid@boah.in.gov. To register online visit www.boah.in.gov and click on the premise registration link.

Avian

AVIAN INFLUENZA continues to be a hot topic in the poultry industry. BOAH, in cooperation with the Indiana State Poultry Association, has an ongoing surveillance program to detect the presence of any strain of avian influenza. Approximately 30,000 birds are tested in Indiana for avian influenza and other diseases that could affect the state's poultry industry. That figure will grow to 75,000 this year. Commercial and exhibition poultry are routinely tested to ensure they meet the highest international health standards.

Hoosier bird owners and veterinarians who suspect a case of highly pathogenic avian influenza should contact the Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory at Purdue University to submit birds for testing. A veterinary referral is not required for poultry and exotic pet bird species. Backyard flocks represent an important surveillance group to ensure this disease has not spread to the state of Indiana. More information about avian influenza and other avian diseases is available on the BOAH website at www.boah.in.gov, click on the Avian link.

Swine

USDA, APHIS-VS and the Indiana State Board of Animal Health are conducting a surveillance program for classical swine fever (CSF), formerly known as hog cholera.

The goal of the program is to enhance surveillance for rapid detection of CSF virus that may be introduced into U.S. swine. Indiana has been identified as one of the 18 high-risk states due to the high numbers of swine, operations utilizing an international labor force and the presence of feral swine in some areas of the state.

Samples will be collected from farms and at veterinary diagnostic laboratories, from animals condemned at slaughter plants by USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS), from dead stock at selected swine markets, and other swine targeted as high-risk through the BOAH Meat and Poultry Inspection Division. Samples from these animals are of primary importance because of the risk of CSF.

For more information about the CSF surveillance program contact Dr. John Johnston, Director, Swine Division at jjohnston@boah.in.gov or 317/227-0314.